

# HELPING A STUDENT IN DISTRESS

This document is a guide to recognizing signs of a student in distress, how to respond in the moment, and who to contact or refer.

## 1- RECOGNIZE signs that a student is experiencing mental health concerns.

<p><b>ACADEMIC SIGNS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeated absences</li> <li>• Decline in work quality</li> <li>• Classroom disruptions</li> <li>• Repeated requests for special provisions outside of formal accommodation plan</li> <li>• Intense focus on perfectionism</li> <li>• Extreme responses to grades or other evaluations</li> </ul>	<p><b>PHYSICAL SIGNS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in physical appearance, including decreased personal hygiene</li> <li>• Excessive fatigue or falling asleep in class repeatedly</li> <li>• Noticeable cuts, bruises, or burns</li> <li>• Frequent or chronic illness</li> <li>• Disorganized, rapid, or slurred speech</li> <li>• Bloodshot or watery eyes</li> <li>• Smelling of alcohol or other signs of intoxication</li> </ul>	<p><b>EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty controlling emotions</li> <li>• Excessive tearfulness, anxiety, irritability, and/or apathy</li> <li>• Expressions of hopelessness or worthlessness</li> <li>• Aggressive, excessively demanding, or dependent behaviour</li> <li>• Disclosure of distress (e.g., family problems, financial difficulties, loss)</li> <li>• Shakiness, tremors, fidgeting, pacing, and/or inability to make eye contact</li> <li>• Expressions of concern from student's peers</li> </ul>
<p><b>SAFETY SIGNS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unprovoked anger or hostility</li> <li>• Disturbing content in assignments (e.g., violence, suicide, and/or death)</li> <li>• Implied or direct threats to harm self or others (e.g., <i>I'm going away for a long time or it won't matter soon</i>).</li> </ul>	<p><b>EMERGENCY SIGNS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical or verbal aggression towards themselves, others, animals, or property</li> <li>• Lack of response to the external environment. For example, the student is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incoherent or passed out</li> <li>- Demonstrating a severe disturbance of cognitive, behavioural, or emotional functioning</li> <li>- Displaying disruptive behaviour that appears to be out of control</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

## **2 – RESPOND** appropriately to a student who needs support based on the signs present, your relationship with them, and whether you have time to respond in the moment.

A student experiencing the above signs may **not** be experiencing mental health concerns. A helpful rule is to watch for **changes** and respond to...

### **SEVERAL LESSER SIGNS**

#### • **OPTION 1: “I have a relationship or rapport with the student.”**

##### **PREPARE:**

- Choose a time and place where you can speak privately
- Ensure you have time to listen
- Minimize potential distractions (e.g., phone calls or emails)
- Remember supportive body language (e.g., mirror their body language, leave space for silence, respect cultural differences)

##### **START THE CONVERSATION:**

- Refer to specific behaviours (e.g., *I noticed you missed three classes last week*) and avoid judgments (e.g., *I noticed you’ve been skipping a lot of classes*)
- Share your concern and ask permission to talk (e.g., *I am concerned about... Would it be okay if we talked about...*)
- Use tentative language to provide room for disagreement (e.g., *I may be wrong, but...*)
- If you are concerned about suicide risk, ask the student if they are considering suicide. Asking will **not** make them consider suicide.

##### **BALANCE PRIVACY AND SAFETY:**

- Do **not** promise privacy. Safety always comes first. Be honest with the student that you must disclose what they tell you to emergency and/or mental health services if safety is a concern.
- Only ask for the information you need to connect the student to appropriate resources and services. Do **not** ask for detailed information (e.g., diagnosis, details of an assault, family history). If the student shares detailed information, gently inform them that you only need enough information to help connect them to a resource or service that can help.

#### • **OPTION 2: “I do not have a relationship or rapport with the student.”**

**EMAIL THE MENTAL HEALTH COORDINATOR** ([mentalhealth@stu.ca](mailto:mentalhealth@stu.ca)) and ask for assistance.

### **ONE OR MORE SAFETY RISK SIGNS**

##### **PLEASE CONTACT**

- Campus Security **506-453-4830** (24/7, 365 days per year) or
- Mobile Crisis Unit **506-453-2132** (available noon to 10 p.m., 7 days a week, including statutory holidays) or
- Chimo Helpline **506-450-4357** or **1-800-667-5005** (available 24 hours per day, 365 days per year) and ask for assistance

### **ONE OR MORE EMERGENCY SIGNS**

##### **PLEASE CONTACT**

- Campus Security **506-453-4830** (24/7, 365 days per year) or
- Emergency Services **911**

### 3 – REFER a student to mental health services and resources in an appropriate way.

- Be aware of the resources and services listed below so your referrals are appropriate and helpful to the student
- Acknowledge your limitations (e.g., *I am not the best person to help with this, but there are resources and services available that can help you*)
- Normalize the need to ask for help (e.g., *We all need to access help at different times*)
- Emphasize personal control (e.g., *It is your decision, not mine*)
- Let them know there are options (e.g., *There are a variety of options available*)
- Wrap up the conversation
  - Thank the student for speaking with you (e.g., *I appreciate your willingness to speak with me*)
  - Acknowledge the conversation may have been difficult (e.g., *I know it takes courage to talk about this*)
  - Review next steps (e.g., *Before you go, let's review how you'll connect to those referrals*)
  - Keep the door open (e.g., *Please reach out again if you need anything*), but do not promise availability (do **not** say "I'm here any time" or give your personal email or phone number)

## CRISIS SERVICES

<p><b>MOBILE CRISIS UNIT</b> Addiction and Mental Health Services <b>Call</b> 506-453-2132 <b>Hours of operation:</b> Noon to 10 p.m., 7 days a week, including statutory holidays <b>You will speak to a registered social worker or nurse.</b></p>	<p><b>CHIMO HELPLINE</b> <b>Call</b> 506-450-4357 (Fredericton area) or 1-800-667-5005 (toll-free, province-wide only) <b>Hours of operation:</b> 24 hours per day, 365 days per year <b>You will talk to someone trained in crisis intervention.</b></p>
<p><b>TALK SUICIDE CANADA</b> <b>Call</b> 1-833-456-4566 (available 24 hours per day, 365 days per year) <b>Text</b> 45645 from 5pm-1am <b>You will talk to someone trained in suicide prevention.</b></p>	<p><b>CALL 911</b> or visit your local hospital. The hospital closest to STU campus: <b>Dr. Everett Chalmers Regional Hospital</b> <b>Phone:</b> 506-452-5400 <b>Address:</b> 700 Priestman Street, Fredericton, NB E3B5N5</p>

## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

<p>Visit <a href="http://www.stu.ca/mentalhealth">www.stu.ca/mentalhealth</a> for detailed information on mental health resources and services available to students, including options for one-at-a-time and ongoing counselling (see <a href="http://STU.ca/counselling">STU.ca/counselling</a>)</p>	<p><b>STUDENT WELLNESS</b> Available to all STU students; you will speak to a professional counsellor. FREE counselling is available 24/7 by phone 1-833-549-3281 <b>Questions? <a href="http://studentbenefits.ca/studentwellness">studentbenefits.ca/studentwellness</a> or call 1-833-549-3281</b></p>
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## CAMPUS SUPPORT SERVICES

<p><b>ACADEMIC ADVISING</b> Kelly Hogg &amp; Alison Belyea Email: <a href="mailto:advising@stu.ca">advising@stu.ca</a>   Call <b>506-452-0530</b> Office: GMH 101</p>	<p><b>INDIGENOUS INITIATIVES/WABANAKI CENTRE</b> Sonja Perley (Nikanahpat/Director) Email: <a href="mailto:sperley@stu.ca">sperley@stu.ca</a>   Call <b>506-452-0481</b> Chelsea Harris-Carr &amp; Baily Sappier Email: <a href="mailto:charriscarr@stu.ca">charriscarr@stu.ca</a>   Email: <a href="mailto:bsappier@stu.ca">bsappier@stu.ca</a> Wabanaki Centre: JDH 209</p>
<p><b>ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES</b> Amanda Manning &amp; Bailey Gardner Email: <a href="mailto:accessibility@stu.ca">accessibility@stu.ca</a>   Call <b>506-453-7207</b> Office: GMH 104</p>	<p><b>INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COORDINATOR</b> Carrie Monteith-Levesque Email: <a href="mailto:cmonteith@stu.ca">cmonteith@stu.ca</a>   Call <b>506-452-9593</b> Office: GMH 203</p>
<p><b>CAMPUS MINISTRY</b> Claire Morrison Email: <a href="mailto:campusministry@stu.ca">campusministry@stu.ca</a>   Call <b>506-452-0636</b> Office: HCH G14</p>	<p><b>MENTAL HEALTH COORDINATOR</b> Email: <a href="mailto:mentalhealth@stu.ca">mentalhealth@stu.ca</a>   Call <b>506-460-0382</b> Office: GMH 307</p>
<p><b>CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT ADVOCATES</b> Email: <a href="mailto:csasa@svnb.ca">csasa@svnb.ca</a>   Call <b>506-453-4530</b> Office: JDH 2nd floor</p>	<p><b>REGISTRAR'S OFFICE</b> Maureen Barnes &amp; Kate Crawford Email: <a href="mailto:registrarsoffice@stu.ca">registrarsoffice@stu.ca</a>   Call <b>506-452-0530</b> Office: GMH 101</p>
<p><b>COUNSELLING SERVICES (SHARED SERVICE STU/UNB)</b> Email: <a href="mailto:counsel@unb.ca">counsel@unb.ca</a>   Call <b>506-453-4820</b> Office: 2nd floor, CC Jones Student Services Centre, UNB</p>	<p><b>RESIDENCE LIFE</b> Jeremy Fowler &amp; Sylenah Beckford Email: <a href="mailto:residencelife@stu.ca">residencelife@stu.ca</a>   Call <b>506-452-0578</b> Office: GMH 303</p>
<p><b>CULTURAL DIVERSITY COORDINATOR</b> Saa Andrew Gbongbor Email: <a href="mailto:sagbongbor@stu.ca">sagbongbor@stu.ca</a>   Call <b>506-452-0423</b> Office: GMH 306</p>	<p><b>STUDENT SUCCESS COACH</b> Kath Hyndman Email: <a href="mailto:khyndman@stu.ca">khyndman@stu.ca</a>   Call <b>506-452-9654</b> Office: GMH 305</p>
<p><b>DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES (ACTING)</b> Cory Flynn Email: <a href="mailto:cflynn@stu.ca">cflynn@stu.ca</a>   Call <b>506-453-7213</b> Office: GMH 312</p>	<p><b>TRANSITIONS COORDINATOR</b> Brett McCavour Email: <a href="mailto:brettm@stu.ca">brettm@stu.ca</a></p>
<p><b>EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING &amp; CAREER DEVELOPMENT</b> Esme Newling, Ale Navas, &amp; Erin Feicht Email: <a href="mailto:experientialoffice@stu.ca">experientialoffice@stu.ca</a> Call 506-460-0360 Office: GMH 302 &amp; GMH 311</p>	<p><b>WRITING CENTRE</b> Heather MacDonald Email: <a href="mailto:hmac@stu.ca">hmac@stu.ca</a>   Call <b>506-452-0480</b> Office: ECH 102</p>
<p><b>HEALTH SERVICES – MEDICAL CLINIC (SHARED SERVICE STU/UNB)</b> Email: <a href="mailto:shc@unb.ca">shc@unb.ca</a>   Call <b>506-453-4837</b> Office: 3rd floor, CC Jones Student Services Centre, UNB</p>	

### 4 – REFLECT after interacting with a student in distress.

Helping a student in distress can be emotionally draining. It may be helpful to:

- Debrief with a colleague or friend (while maintaining student privacy)
- Monitor changes in your emotional, physical, or behavioural state, as they could indicate that you are struggling and need support
- Remember to take care of yourself

You can also reach out to the Mental Health Coordinator ([mentalhealth@stu.ca](mailto:mentalhealth@stu.ca)) with any questions or concerns.